
Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 24 May 2016

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2016 were confirmed.

2 CONDITION 18 REPORTS

It was noted that a couple of condition 18 reports had recently been submitted to the Home Office Inspector. Comments had not yet been received back.

3 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

3.1 Sharing of resources working group

The group had met during January 2016. The Committee were pleased with the initial progress that had been made and the subsequent developments.

3.2 Rodent Handling Group

This group had put together a best practice policy on how to handle rodents, which was based on their experience and papers they had read and was designed to encourage users to follow best practice when handling animals. This was still in a draft format and had only been shared with one scientist so far (as well as the Committee) for comment.

If routine handling procedures were aversive, animals were likely to develop anxiety and show exaggerated stress responses when approached. This was detrimental to animal welfare and increases the difficulty of handling as animals attempt to avoid contact/restraint and may show defensive aggression. Handling stress could also be a major confounding variable and an unwanted source of variation within and between experiments. Good training in non-aversive handling was beneficial for the animal, for the handler and for the reliability of data gained in experiments.

Good techniques of handling rodents were demonstrated as part of the Home Office courses with researchers getting the opportunity to try different ones and see which they preferred.

It was pointed out that the relevant handling technique could also be dependent on whether dealing with a small number of animals or a large group. For example if dealing with a small number of mice it was better to use a handling tunnel, but if a large number needed to be handled in a short period of time then the cupping method would be better.

AWERB were supportive of the policy. Several modifications were agreed. Once these changes had been made the policy would be circulated for formal sign off.

4 ASSESSORS LIST REVIEW

The assessors list was reviewed and it was noted that several changes were needed, as well as names of several people who could be approached as new assessors.

5 SCHEDULE 1 LIST REVIEW

This would be done by e-mail. The NACWOs in each unit to confirm that the list was accurate for their area.

6 TRAINING

All training records were now on the training database. A reminder e-mail to PILHs would be sent reminding them to keep their training records updated and to ensure they were assessed every 3 years for each technique they used.

7 GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON GOOD PRACTICE FOR ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODIES

The RSPCA had recently updated this document. AWERB were reviewing sections from the handbook to assess whether current practice in the College currently matched with the suggestions made by this document and whether any improvements were needed.

7.1 Section: Forum for Discussion

The aim was to provide a forum for discussion and development of ethical advice to the establishment licence holder on all matters related to animal welfare, care and use at the establishment.

It was agreed that this should be wider than AWERB. All staff and students should be encouraged to be aware of ethical issues and consider the implications of them. The ethics meetings would be advertised on the intranet and people encouraged to put forward topics either directly or through an online suggestion box if they preferred to be anonymous.

AWERB could also organise seminars involving outside speakers to stimulate discussion.

The College ran tours of BSU for non-research staff. New staff and existing staff are able to book on these each month.

It was suggested that there be a discussion forum as part of the undergraduate timetable, so students could have the opportunity to discuss use of animals in research.

7.2 Section: Managerial systems

This item related to establishing and reviewing management and operational processes for monitoring, reporting and follow up in relation to the welfare of animals housed or used in the licensed establishment.

The Ethics and Welfare Committee regularly visited the BSU facilities at both campuses which AWERB were also invited to attend and provided observations. AWERB also received updates from NVS on their inspections of the facilities.

8 NVS REPORTS

8.1 NVS report – Camden

The NVS for Camden had been satisfied with the monitoring of the animals and the record keeping. All animals were in good health condition.

8.2 NVS report – Hawkshead

The following points were noted:

- The fixator work would be restarting that day with a pilot taking place that afternoon
- Some mortality of chicks had been reported after arrival in the welfare barn. The circumstances were being investigated.
- The socialisation programme for dogs was progressing well with the dogs being a lot more amenable to being handled. A call would go out on the intranet looking for additional volunteers to get involved in the programme.
- A number of the dogs had been rehomed.

9 NEW SOFTWARE TOOL

The owner of a new software tool was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that the tool was a web and mobile application designed to enable research teams to optimize the use of laboratory animals by sharing organs and tissues that would otherwise be discarded.

The tool followed the principles of the 3Rs (replacement, reduction, refinement) as a framework for humane animal research by ensuring that animals are used optimally, a process that will ultimately reduce the overall numbers of animals used in scientific research.

10 PROJECT LICENCES – MID TERM REVIEW

A mid term review for a project licence was received. The consensus was that the project had already generated a lot of useful data, resulting in a number of good studies being published.

AWERB noted that the group have developed and published a method for using qPCR to count parasites, to replace traditional methods. This meant that animal group sizes could be reduced from the previous 8 to 10 birds, down to 6 birds, without losing statistical power.

11 PROJECT LICENCES- END OF LICENCE REVIEW

An end of project licence review was received.

12 PROJECT LICENCES GOING THROUGH ETHICAL REVIEW

AWERB noted that there was one new project licence and one amendment going through ethical review. Three amendments to project licences had also been approved by the Home Office.

A study form had also been approved on behalf of AWERB.

13 PRESENTATION FROM PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER

The Project Licence Holder advised that he was in the process of submitting an amendment to his project licence, to include an additional protocol. This addition would allow measurement of long-term postural and physiological adaptations to hypergravity. Discussions were held around the time taken to reach the maximum daily exposure of animals to the experimental conditions.

14 PRESENTATION FROM PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER

An application for a new project licence was discussed. It was explained that this project licence would allow the production of antisera, antibodies and related materials to support the development and delivery of human and animal healthcare. The Project would also support fundamental and applied research in these areas.

After discussion the Committee were content that the licence application proceed. They would require each new project under this licence to be reviewed to ensure the specific protocol was ethically acceptable.